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Domestic Violence: Implications in terms of causative theories

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Abstract

Paper is an attempt to highlight the menace of domestic violence. Paper starts with building the issue through some real narrations of the victims of the domestic violence. Stories are from across the countries and societies which points out that menace is prevalent among all the societies irrespective of all sorts of variations. Also there are number of common grounds for occurrence of domestic violence. These grounds also indicate that there must be some theories to explain such grounds. This followed causative theories (Biological Theory, Psychoanalytic Theory, Couple and Family Interactions Theory, Behavioristic Theory and Societal Structure Theory) to explain the syndrome. Along with each causative theory some suggestions are added as possible ways out to weed out the problem. In the concluding remarks author emphasizes that implications of the causative theories must be accommodated in the learning contents of education system as ultimately children will become couples and parents. We should build the defenses in education as it eliminates the problem silently and effectively.

Keywords: domestic violence, violence, causative theories, women, society

1. Introduction

Domestic violence has become a menace of so called civilized society world over which calls for immediate attention. It is peculiar in nature the weaker partner is assaulted by the stronger one who is entrusted to protect the weaker. It not only cause physical damage but immensely affects the psychological well being of the aggrieved. Unfortunately laws by governments remained ineffective to address the issue, NGO's are considered as outsiders and relatives play more of a cover up role than exposing the same. Majority of times it comes to light at very later stage, when it has already become an ugly routine. Author feels that failure of efforts to curtail the menace may be due to lack of understanding of the causes of the phenomenon. This is why present paper is about understanding it in terms of causative theories available in the literature.

Before going to the issue we need to read some of the millions of stories revealed by the victims themselves which highlight the gravity of the menace called domestic violence, here these narratives go...

I was in the 6th week of pregnancy when an ultrasound showed that I was carrying twins. My mother-in-law and husband demanded a sex determination test to know the gender of my babies. They tortured me so that I would get it done. They took me to the hospital where I was admitted to the labor room. The gynecologist advised a kidney and bladder ultrasound, but the radiologist conducted a fetal ultrasound instead. The ultrasound delivered the news that my babies were female. This is not what my family wanted to hear. My mother-in-law asked me to at least have one child killed in-utero. She told me that my two daughters would be a huge burden on the family and that abortion was the only way. They continued to torture me. On 17 May 2005, after a bout of abuse, I was close to miscarrying. They shut me up in the room without food or water. I managed to call my father in the morning. After much persuasion, my husband agreed to bring me to my parents' home. Due to all the tension, I delivered two pre-term daughters on 11 August. Even after the birth of my children, I suffered verbal abuse and I had no help in caring for my babies. My mother-in-law deliberately pushed my 4-month-old daughter down the staircase and pretended it was an accident. The children's paternal grandparents and aunts rejected them totally. My husband turned me out of the house so he could remarry and have sons- Mitukhurana, India (<http://worldpulse.com/magazine/articles/my-story-standing-up?page=0,2>)

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At the hospital, there was not a single doctor. The room was crowded with women in various stages of delivery. We were forced to labor on benches, as there was only one bed. When the baby crowned at the birth canal, women would be transferred to the only available bed. A nurse sternly warned me not to push, despite my baby's insistence on coming into this world. When I could not take it any further, I screamed and the nurse almost hit me. "I told you not to push! No space for you to deliver!" The pain of attempting to stop my labor made me cry out in more pain. I pulled my husband aside and gave him these instructions: "If I die, ensure that you take me back to my village for burial. I do not want to be buried in Lagos, or in your village." He responded with a hiss. When my baby was finally delivered, she could not breathe. The nurse looked at me straight in the face and said, "Witch, you have killed your daughter." She handed the baby to my husband and said, "She is a still birth. Your wife killed your child." - Olutisin Oladosu Adebowale, Nigeria
(<http://worldpulse.com/magazine/articles/women-birth-a-new-vision-for-maternity-care>)

Reem was playing in the street of her Yemen neighborhood just a few months after her 10th birthday when a cousin three times her age took her to her grandfather's house and immediately married her. Though her mother objected to the union, her father consented. "I was a little girl," "I was not fit for marriage, but I was poor." "When I tried to get a divorce they said I couldn't, that I was too young, and I said, 'How come you didn't say I was too young to get married?'" - Reem, Yaman
(<http://worldpulse.com/magazine/articles/married-at-age-10-reem-al-numery-speaks-out>)

On the plane I realized I was about to get my period. I was embarrassed but stood up to ask the air hostess for a sanitary pad. The men next to me asked me to sit back down. When I did, he asked me why I was standing. Eventually, I told him. He lectured me, telling me that women shouldn't be allowed inside when they are menstruating. Instead, they should spend those three days in the backyard and in the woods near the villages. I was appalled at his ignorance and told him that he was born in the very blood he loathes. "Are you shameless?" he said. "You are discussing such nasty things with unknown men?" I was moved with uncontrollable resentment. I stood up. Yes, I should stand up—for me and for the women. He jeered at me and changed his seat. - Mahe Jabeen, India
(<http://worldpulse.com/magazine/articles/my-story-standing-up>)

"Teach the girl child how to use her mind, not destroy her body." This isn't just an empowering message for girls; it's also a lyric of a catchy song by Cameroonian artist Raminas King. The song is part of a campaign by Gender Danger to end breast ironing, a widespread practice in Cameroon where mothers iron their daughters' breasts with hot stones and other kitchen utensils in an attempt to delay puberty and halt their daughters' physical development. Chi Yvonne Leina Cameroon

(<http://worldpulse.com/magazine/articles/cameroon-music-breaks-the-silence-about-breast-ironing?page=0,0>)

Daisy and her siblings were children witnessing abuse on their mother by their step-father. An effect of children witnessing domestic abuse was that her brother then committed further sexually inappropriate behaviour towards both his sisters, including Daisy. -Daisey
(http://www.hiddenhurt.co.uk/daisy_children_witnessing_abuse.html)

Analysis of Introductory Stories:

In all the stories described, there are common things, allowance and encouragement of domestic violence.

- Is usually bore by a female the weaker member of family or a relation;
- is rooted deep in the family or community culture;
- is committed more times by intimate partner or a person in near relation;
- is due to gross ignorance of health care of females around the world;
- is because of huge insensitivity and cruelty towards battered by the batterer;
- is encouraged by the ineffective social and legal mechanisms to curtail it;
- is issue of finances, insecurity and false identity;
- is an issue of systematically depriving the woman from her rightful place;
- is an issue of patriarchal domination;
- is an issue of divided women on the bases of man made divisions
- is an issue of mindset, which needs to be at all levels

Face the Facts:

Let us now face some facts based on WHO sponsored research which supports the above pointed out characteristics in the described stories.

- Female children are valued less in society than males (e.g. Peru, where female children are considered to have less social and economic potential).
- Physical punishment is an acceptable or normal part of rearing a child (e.g. Turkey, Ethiopia)
- Communities adhere to harmful traditional cultural practices such as genital mutilation or child marriage (e.g. Nigeria, Sudan).
- A man has a right to assert power over a woman and is socially superior (e.g. India , Nigeria, Ghana)
- A man has a right to "correct" or discipline female behaviour (e.g. India, Nigeria, China)
- A woman's freedom should be restricted (e.g. Pakistan)
- Physical violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts within a relationship (e.g. South Africa, China)
- A woman is responsible for making a marriage work (e.g. Israel)
- Intimate partner violence is a taboo subject (e.g. South Africa) and reporting abuse is disrespectful (e.g. Nigeria).

- Divorce is shameful (e.g. Pakistan)
- When a dowry (financial payment from the bride's family to the husband) or bride wealth (financial payment from the husband to the bride's family) is an expected part of marriage (e.g. Nigeria, India)
- Violence can occur either because financial demands are not met, or because bride wealth becomes synonymous with purchasing and thus owning a wife.
- A man's honour is linked to a woman's sexual behaviour. Here, any deviation from sexual norms disgraces the entire family, which can then lead to honour killings (e.g. Jordan)
- Sex is a man's right in marriage (e.g. Pakistan).
- Girls are responsible for controlling a man's sexual urges (e.g. South Africa)
- Sexual violence is an acceptable way of putting women in their place or punishing them (e.g. South Africa)
- Sexual activity (including rape) is a marker of masculinity (e.g. South Africa).
- Sex and sexuality are taboo subjects (e.g. Pakistan).
- Reporting youth violence or bullying is unacceptable (e.g. the United Kingdom).
- Sexual violence such as rape is shameful for the victim, which prevents disclosure (e.g. the United States)
- Violence is an acceptable way of resolving conflict (e.g. the United States of America).

(<http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/publications/en/index.html>)

On the basis of above cited facts and observations we can safely conclude that family and community are the driving force which encourage the domestic violence. In a way we understand that as problem has its origin in family, so we need to solve it by building defense against it in the family itself. For building defense we need to understand theoretical aspect of the menace, which can guide us to potential solution of the trouble. This can be understood by going through the causative theories of domestic violence available in the literature.

Causative Theories of Domestic Violence and Implication:

Biological Theory: According to this theory, violent behavior is biological and organic and can be explained by genetics, biochemistry, and changes in brain development due to trauma. For example, it is believed that some abusive men have histories of head injuries, which have affected their ability to solve problems and control impulsivity. Researchers in this camp have linked the trauma of early exposure to chronic violence which causes changes in child's brain function that leads to violent behavior as an adult.

This suggests

- Parents should take good care of children and avoid any head injury to be paid for in later life. In the event of brain injury medical attention must be arranged as early as possible.

- Parents need to have calm relation in married life. If parents have abusive environment, it would be best to send the child in boarding school.
- Child should only be produced when s/he is welcomed, and couple should have a cozy relation during the pregnancy. This affects both genetics as well as biochemistry which affect psychology of the individual in later life.

Psychoanalytic Theory: From this perspective, domestic violence is rooted in individual psychopathology or dysfunctional personality structures, which are more likely than biological factors to be learned and shaped by early childhood experiences. The experiences in formative years are found to have ever lasting effect on personality make up. As the child grows the behavior gets eternalized and expresses itself like a compulsive one may take many forms. Research in this area includes studies of male batterers, showing that witnessing domestic violence or being the victim of abuse undermines one's ability to trust and to regulate emotions and results in hostile, dependent, insecure individuals with little ability to develop healthy relationships. Similar research shows that male batterers are more likely than non-batterers to score poorly on mental health tests (for example, anxiety, depression, mania, psychosis) and criminality indicators (for example, anti-social personality and stranger violence).

This suggests

- Child must be provided with healthy and affectionate environment so as to have better mental health in later life. Parents should rather intentionally design psychologically sound environment around the child;
- Help of a counselor, psychologists or a specialist if needed should not be ignored.
- Environment of the individual must be changed if needed to reduce the encouragement for abusive behaviour.
- Environment of school also matter, to re-enforce or resist the impact of abusive environment at home.

Couple and Family Interactions Theory: This theory suggests that domestic violence is rooted in the faulty interactions of a couple and family system, and that an individual's violent behavior cannot be addressed without understanding the context, characteristics, and dynamics of the familial relationships. It is believed that quality of relation between couple even affect the genetics and behavior of unborn child. In formative years of child in case the couple has strained relation there is great possibility of domestic violence which will be learnt by the child. Repetition of events of domestic violence will make it acceptable, which is the real danger for furthering the syndrome.

This suggests

- Couple must be at peace while planning for a child.
- Couple must develop faith and mutual respect which is necessary for setting good family traditions and values.
- Couple must be clear, interactive and transparent in dealings.

- Couple should have soothing relation with children and same is expected among siblings.

Behavioristic Theory: This perspective suggests that domestic violence is learned behavior that is modeled, rewarded, and supported by families and/or the broader culture. Analyses based on this theory focus on the ways children learn that aggression is appropriate to resolve conflicts, especially within the context of intimate relationships. Researchers have found that batterers are much more likely to have had violent fathers than are non-batterers. Developmental research shows that early intervention with children from violent households may restore normal developmental processes, such as empathy and self-control, and minimize the risk of further harm caused by exposure to abusive adult models.

This suggests

- Family culture should be violence free and violence discouraging.
- Abusive language and aggressive reactions should not be rewarded rather need to be handled through behavior modification techniques.
- Conflicts should be resolved by peaceful means and parents should be trained to do the same.
- In case of child has abusive tendencies, s/he should be placed in positive environment to save form negative development.
- Child should not be presented with negative models; rather it needs to be criticized for disapproval on logics.
- Violent behaviors should not be reinforced or ignored
- Parents should have consistent behavior, meaning thereby child must clearly know which behavior is acceptable and which one is not, which behavior will bring reward and which will mean punishment.

Societal Structure Theory: According to this view, domestic violence is caused by an underlying power imbalance that can be understood only by examining society as a whole. The analysis focuses on patriarchy or male domination over women and children through physical, economic, religious and political control. Domestic violence reflects women's inequality in the culture and the reinforcement of this reality by various institutions. The acceptability of these institutions in general public aggravates the situation. It is not built in days; rather take shape in hundreds of years which make sit difficult to revert.

- Society needs to be refined on the basis of research and observation facts to denounce the violence endorsing customs and traditions.
- Family culture should be balanced by division of labor rather than patriarchal or matriarchal lines.
- Family rules and rights should be prejudice free and justified.
- No indirect means should be used as instrument of controlling other family members.
- Family interaction tools like- language, role assignment, value acceptance should have gender free orientation.

Concluding remarks

Domestic violence is so deep rooted that it needs to be fought at many fronts as explored through causative theories. This is more of a bigger problem in conservative and traditional societies. As paper suggests so many way outs to address the issue at familial and social level, but one can not ignore state instruments to control the menace- law, justice, constitutional rights and most importantly education. Young ones must educated about the menace- causes and consequences, methods and means for elimination, provisions and services available for fighting against it. What we are trying to tell to the families and society must also be told to the students, as they are going to be future parents and members of the society. All the referred causative theories could give some inputs for learning contents in school and higher education so that defenses could be built silently, as education do. Let us hope this work, and every one should contribute whatever possible for eliminating this menace from this planet

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